

2.9.1 – Chief Commissioner’s Directive - Supporting young people with Gender Identity Difference

1. This document contains practical guidance on supporting young people with gender identity differences.

- Scouts ACT is committed to diversity and inclusion and is open to all young people regardless of their gender identity. Gender identity issues do not just affect adults; children even as young as 2 years old can be diagnosed with ‘gender dysphoria’ or ‘gender identity disorder’.
- There is great potential to offer young people with gender identity issues great support at a time when they may feel excluded from many of the social activities that most young people take for granted. There is also a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that transgender young people can access Scouting.

2. What do gender identity issues in young people look like?

- The young person may have chosen to or be considering living as their true gender; being known by a different name, wearing different clothes and/or concealing parts of their body. The young person may or may not decide to have treatment or gender reassignment (see below) to change their body to match their true gender.

3. A young person is going through or considering gender reassignment / transition; what does this mean?

- The young person may decide they want to either permanently alter their body or their appearance to match their true gender. Young people may have prescribed medication to stop puberty from progressing, or hormones to allow their body to develop in the way of their true gender. Later on, the young person might undergo surgery to change their bodies to match their true gender. This whole journey is gender reassignment or transition, and is usually complex and takes place over a long time, varying between individuals. Be aware that this experience can be very stressful and the process might be confusing for the young person. The young person has a right to be treated as their true gender irrespective of what stage they are at.

4. What are some of the challenges faced by young people who are transgender?

a. Puberty

- Puberty can be a very difficult time for all young people, but even more so for young trans people, as their body is changing physically in a way that contradicts their true gender. Drugs may be prescribed to ‘block’ puberty. Young people who are developing breasts may strap down their chest, to make it less obvious. This is called ‘binding’ and it is important to respect the young person’s decision to do this.

b. Prejudice and discrimination

- Unfortunately, people who are transgender often experience prejudice and discrimination, much of which is unlawful and covered by equality legislation. Young people may have experienced or be experiencing transphobic bullying.

c. Emotional wellbeing

- People who are transgender are more likely to experience mental health issues or have low self esteem, often due to prejudice and discrimination they may encounter. They may not have told their families or they may be facing hostility from them.

5. How do I make my Section inclusive?

- Avoid gender stereotyping (e.g. boys like football, girls like the colour pink).
- When addressing the whole Section/Unit, gender neutral terms will help to support an open and inclusive environment. For example, use "hello everybody" instead of "hello gentlemen" or talking to a group of female Scouts as "ladies".
- Don't split young people by gender in any activities.
- Allow young people to express their identity freely and don't make assumptions.

6. How can I support a young person who is transgender or questioning their gender identity?

- Be led by the young person, and, where supportive, the parents/carers. Be aware of the possibility that parents/carers may have their own prejudices or may be unaware of how the young person feels.
- Listen to and accept what the young person is telling you, without judgement. Reassure them and explain that there are other young people who have these feelings; including those in Scouting. Refer on to organisations like Diversity ACT if needed.
- Be vigilant at looking for signs of bullying. Treat this in the same way as any other bullying, following our anti-bullying policy and using our [anti-bullying resources](#). It may be that effectively raising young people's understanding of gender identity issues will prevent or eliminate any bullying.
- Find out whether or not the young person is happy for others to know that they are transgender. Respect the young person's rights and privacy, and reassure of complete confidentiality; do not tell others without their consent.
- Don't ask for information about what medical treatment they have had unless you need to ask for a valid reason.
- Ensure when addressing the young person that you use their preferred gender, name and pronouns. Deal with any mistakes sensitively, correcting by use of the young person's preferred name.
- If the young person changes their name / gender during their time in Scouting, ensure you change all records. You do not need any evidence or proof to do so.
- It is important to treat the young person as a member of their true gender, whilst protecting them and all young people from vulnerable situations. Be aware that the young person will not want to appear different from their peers and to avoid causing any embarrassment. Don't let their gender identity become a frequent talking point.
- Conduct any conversations in an appropriate environment and in accordance with [Scouts ACT Child Protection Policy](#).

7. Will I need to adapt activities?

- If you have young people who are binding their chests, monitor them carefully during particularly physical activities (such as rock climbing) and hot temperatures. There is a chance that the binding could cause discomfort or even impair breathing, and it may be necessary to subtly offer more breaks.
- Take special considerations around water-based activities such as swimming. Plan and discuss with the young person/parent in advance.
- Be aware that the young person may want to wear layers of clothing to conceal their body.

8. What toilets should the young person use?

- Unisex toilet facilities are preferable but often not available. Always be led by the preferences of the young person, around which facilities they feel most comfortable and safe using. Ideally, this would be a cubicle in facilities of their true gender, but they may wish to use the accessible/disabled toilet as an alternative. If using the accessible/disabled toilet is the young person's preferred option, refer to and label toilets appropriately (e.g. 'unisex/accessible toilets' rather than 'disabled')
- Be aware that young trans people may have a lot of anxiety around using toilet facilities, and may even avoid using the toilet or drinking. This can lead to ill health, so it is important to be aware of this and provide reassurance if needed, reminding that they can use whichever facilities they find most comfortable and at any time.

9. What about nights away, camps and trips?

- Discuss options well in advance with the young person and others involved, whilst protecting the young person's right to privacy. The principle is to make sure that everyone is comfortable with the arrangements. Be sensitive to the needs of the young person; avoid making them feel singled out or not respected.
 - As with all young people, confirm whether the young person is on any medication that they will need to take.
 - Consider having one named Leader who is aware of the young person's biological sex and any treatment/medication they are on, who could provide support if medical treatment is needed. Ask the young person who they wish the leader to be; regardless of the leader's gender.
 - For the buddy system, the child should buddy with another child of their chosen gender. As always, ensure that both children are comfortable with this.
 - ***How can I manage the sleeping arrangements?*** Carefully plan sleeping arrangements, assessing the needs and ages of young people, and any risks. A young person may be binding their chests or wearing very tight underwear to flatten themselves. The chance to privately remove this clothing overnight is very important.
- Some options to consider, risk assess and discuss with the young person/family, are as follows:
 - Sharing with other young people of their true gender (or their biological sex if they would prefer), either in large or small tents with their trusted friends.

- Large tents with various sleeping compartments, discretely allocating the young person their own compartment for privacy.
- Having their own tent / room.
- ***What about toilets, showers and changing facilities?*** Wherever possible, select a venue that has separate shower and changing cubicles, and unisex toilet facilities (see guidance around toileting above). Monitor the young person during the event to check that they are not avoiding drinking or using toilets. They may wish to use the facilities when everybody else is busy doing a different activity.
- ***What do I need to consider when organising international events?*** Be aware that some countries are not as open as Australia, legally and culturally. Some may even have laws which make it illegal to be part of the transgender community. Check the laws for the country before you plan a visit. Consider any border crossing checks e.g., airport security screening and that their passport may be in a different name to their preferred name.
- ***Is there anything else I need to consider?*** Be aware that young trans people can sometimes attract a lot of unwanted media attention. In the event of enquiries, make sure 'no comment' and 'no access' are your first responses and refer the matter to the Chief Commissioner, Scouts ACT.

10. How do I respond to any volunteers and/or parents in my Group who are not inclusive of transgender members?

- Remind volunteers of their commitment to our Access and Equity Policies and their Section Leader can support them to change their practise. Often, a lack of awareness or understanding can be to blame, and they may need some education. This could involve discussion, or it may be useful to arrange an awareness raising session in your Section or for the whole Group.
- Reassure parents that Scouting ensures the safety and inclusion of all members. Remind them of the commitment of Scouting to access and equity. Do not discuss any particular child with other parents.
- It is the responsibility of all adults to act as role models by celebrating diversity and creating an environment in which all members can enjoy safe, inclusive Scouting.

11. External organisations

Diversity ACT—<https://diversityact.org.au>

A Gender Agenda—<http://genderrights.org.au>

Gender Help for parents—www.genderhelpforparents.com.au

Adapted from <https://members.scouts.org.uk/supportresources/4228/gender-identity-supporting-young-people?cat=377,378&moduleID=10>

12. Authority

This Directive was approved by the Chief Commissioner on 19 June 2019.